

## **Bowling Lingo**

*By: Luke Fisher*

Every time you step foot into a bowling center all across the world words are spoken that only bowlers might know the meaning of. To many the words don't make a whole lot of sense, but it is a common language that bowlers all across the world use. From the simplest word like "Strike" and "spare" to even the craziest phrases such as the "Greek Church." Bowlers share the common bond of a game we all love and a language only we all know.

There are many common words that all bowlers use no matter where they live, and even many people who only casual bowl even know. I hear all the time while I'm working or bowling different "Open Bowlers" who are bowlers that are bowling without competing in a league our tournament use these basic words. These words are "Strike" when a bowler knocks down all ten pins on the first ball, "Spare" when a bowler knocks down all the pins they didn't knock down on the first ball, "Foul" when a bowler crosses the line that separates the approach and the bowling lane, "Gutter ball" or "channel ball" when a bowler throws the ball in the gutter, and "Headpin" which is the first pin in the rack or ten pins. But these words are basic and anybody who has ever been in a bowling center has probably heard them.

The basic lingo that nearly everybody has heard is a great start and a foundation for many of the other words that are part of a bowler's language. When a person firsts starts bowling words that will soon become part of there personal dictionary come up. These words are "Double" when a bowler throws two strikes in a row, "Turkey" when a bowler throws three strikes in a row, "Baby split" when a bowler leaves either the 2-7 or the 3-10 which are smaller

thus the name “baby” came up, “Chop” when bowlers take one pin out leaving another standing: example would be leaving the 6-10 and taking just the 6 pin out and leaving the 10, “Pocket strike” when a right hander throws a strike hitting the 1-3 pocket or left hander throws a strike hitting the 1-2 pocket, and “Brooklyn strike” When you throw a strike on the wrong side of the pocket: example a right hander hitting the 1-2 pocket instead of the 1-3. I found out in my research NeumannKnight on ballreviews.com who is from Philadelphia pointed out that it is also called a “Jersey” in some parts of the country. These words form the most basic lingo for a bowler and for the most part make sense with the exception of “Brooklyn strike.” This is in use all over the world, dizzyfugu who lives in Germany shared that most in Germany even use the English term.

There is really only one instance where the main bowling terms can vary and this is all caused by one person. Everywhere in the world uses the words “Double” and “Turkey” to describe two and three strikes in a row. After three strikes it had been referred to as whatever the number of strikes with bagger added to the end example: “Four bagger” for four strikes in a row. Rob Stone ESPN commentator for bowling sent bowling lingo into a spin when he coined four strikes in a row as a “Hambone.” Bowling purists were instantly turned off by this, but many in the younger generation love it and can be heard yelling “HAMBONE” all across bowling centers in the nation. With Rob Stone coming up with “Hambone” people started coming up with terms for other strikes which vary from bowling center to bowling center. Where I work at Highlander Bowl in Glasgow, KY everybody refers to four in a row as “Hambone” and then came up with “T-Bone” to describe five in a row. In Arkansas where kidlost2000 from ballreviews.com bowls they are old school and refer to everything after a “Turkey” as a “Four bagger” and so on. Ben

Jessie a good bowling friend of mine has even heard five strikes in a row referred to as “yahtzee.” This basically comes down to a personal preference as to what you prefer, though it seems that the younger generation is more likely to adapt newer lingo. This is the only variant on the main bowling language that I have found in my research.

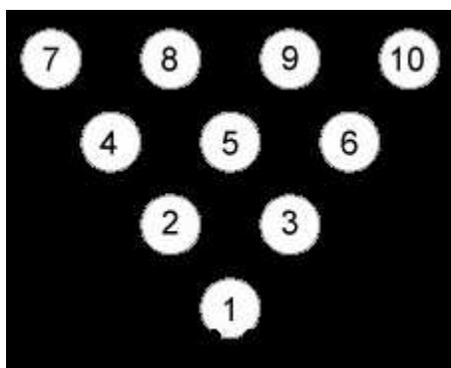
Then there is the lingo that can tell a story, it can be a simple word and can tell you all about how somebody’s bowling and you can feel there pain or there joy. “Greek Church” is when the 4-6-7-8-10 or the 4-6-7-9-10 is left. It resembles a “Greek Church” and this is why bowlers call it that. A bowler can leave the “Lily” when a bowler leaves the 5-7-10. Leaving the “Big Four” is when a bowler leaves the 4-6-7-10. Bowlers can get “tapped” when a bowler throws a ball they think should strike but doesn’t, and can leave a “Stone nine” or “Stone eight” which is when a bowler throws a ball they think is good but leave the eight or nine pin. Bowlers can have a “Ringing” seven or ten pin, this happens with a pin wraps around the pin but doesn’t hit it, and can also leave a “Flat” seven or ten pin and this happens when a pin weakly lays in the gutter and leaves the seven or ten pin standing. A bowler can leave the “Bucket” the 2-4-5-8 or the 3-5-6-9, or have a “washout” when a bowler leaves the 1-3-7, 1-3-6-7, or 1-3-6-7-10 as a left hander or the 1-2-10, 1-2-4-10, or 1-2-4-7-10 as a right hander. With all the bad there are some positives as well. A bowler can have a “Scout,” “Birddog,” or “messenger” which all mean a pin that is rolling on the deck and takes out a pin that is standing. Bowlers can have a “Trip” pin which means the pin got knocked over on a shot that it shouldn’t have. A bowler can be carrying “Light” Strikes where he’s hitting the headpin thin, or he can be throwing them “Flush” where he’s hitting the headpin perfectly. While bowling a team can have a “Beer Frame” this is where everybody on the team strikes in a given frame. A single bowler on a team can get “Hung” where

they are the only person on the team to not strike; this sometimes results in the bowler having to buy the whole team a beer.

But with all the terminology that bowlers use all around the world and that is completely common, there are still bowlers that are very creative and shared with me some of the sayings that they have heard and/or love. PieCrust on ball reviews refers to the big four as the “Richard Nixon” from the two hands in the air picture. Kidlost2000 shared a quote about the Greek Church “If you don’t go to church, the church will come to you.” C-G Proshop-Scout shared an interesting saying for somebody that bowls a perfect 300 game but barley shoots 600 for a three game series saying they “Blew their load” all on the first game. Ben told me one of his favorite sayings when somebody doesn’t strike is on a good ball “watch that hole (In the ball return where balls come back) balls coming back through there” as a smart comment for them not striking. Quotes like these can be found all throughout bowling centers, and I’m sure many are used by different people. Proof of this is snowspike1 had a quote very similar to bens saying “hey your ball will be right back.”

After just scratching the surface of studying bowler’s language its crazy the effect it has on people. Just watching our youth league who’s participants haven’t even been exposed to a tenth of bowling lingo, and are not old enough to really even know what there saying, they can heard talking about having “Turkeys,” leaving “baby splits,” and “chopping” spares and it just puts a smile on my face. After starting this I just kind of laugh every time I hear somebody yell “HAMBONE” or “Got Tapped” just wondering who came up with these and how did it explode to where it is now. I have learned so much about this great sport and how great many of the people that participate in it as they so graciously helped me out. Even though most of what was

contributed I already knew it's still great to know how helpful people really are. Bowlers are a community that has a shared love for the game and a shared language that we all can speak and understand. From the youth bowler to the senior bowler if anybody says "I left the Greek Church" well all know what it means and feel the pain of leaving it not just in the United States but all over the world.



Here's a diagram of the pins to show the alignment.

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